

January 13, 2009 7:07 PM

### Luján Joins Democratic Freshmen to Fight for Rural Communities

Joins Colleagues in Letter to the Speaker, Advocates for Rural Investment in the Economic Recovery

Washington, DC - Rep. Ben Ray Luján joined 20 of the 32 Democratic Freshmen in the House of Representatives on a letter led by Rep. Betsy Markey and sent to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. The letter encourages House leadership to include significant funding for rural communities in the upcoming economic recovery package.

"The many rural communities in New Mexico need relief as our economy continues to struggle," said Luján. "The economic recovery package should include programs and funding that help rural families and create jobs in rural communities. The rural communities in my district need assistance during these difficult economic times, and I will continue to fight to create jobs and get our rural economies back on track."

Rep. Markey drafted the letter to urge the Speaker to invest in rural communities. Rep. Luján and others signed onto the letter to show support for rural communities and families.

### **Full letter, drafted and sent by Rep. Markey:**

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi

Speaker

U.S. House of Representatives

H-232, U.S. Capitol Washington, DC 20515

January 13, 2009

Dear Madam Speaker,

As the 111th Congress begins, we of the freshmen class strongly urge you to consider the many ways in which rural communities can benefit from the national economic recovery and reinvestment plan. Rural areas are among the hardest hit in these tough economic times, and with this economic recovery plan we have an opportunity to provide necessary aid to these communities. We need to ensure that the funding streams contain formulas which make certain that money is funneled directly to rural America. If the funds go through the State, then State governments must be required to allocate equitable portions to rural areas.

The infrastructure of rural economies is in crisis. The economic recovery and reinvestment plan must invest significantly in maintaining and upgrading infrastructure in rural and other distressed communities, which will create local jobs. Among other viable options, the quality of life in rural America can be improved by expanding broadband technology, public transportation, and water and sewage systems.

Rural development funds should also be allocated to benefit local schools, police and fire stations, hospitals and community centers. The USDA reported that rural counties with high educational levels saw more rapid earnings and income growth over the past two decades than counties with lower educational levels. Failure to invest in education may offset or diminish the benefits realized through other investments. Moreover, funding for hospitals and rural and community health care centers is essential because of the enormous responsibility placed on rural family doctors. Because rural areas lack the population base to support many specialty practices, rural physicians are frequently called upon to treat patients across a wide range of specialties.

Assistance to education, health care and other programs is critical if we want all Americans to benefit from this economic recovery and reinvestment plan. Rural communities comprise about

50 million Americans and approximately 75% of our nation's land area. The needs of rural Americans must be directly addressed in this bill if we are to succeed in curbing the economic downturn and improving the lives of everyday Americans.

Please join us in standing with Majority Whip Clyburn to advocate for rural interests and to ask that rural communities be included in the upcoming economic recovery plan.

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